

BY MRS. OLIPHANT.

The Gushtat House stood, as its name denotes, at the angle where two roads met. These were pleasant country roads both,—one, shadowed by trees here and there, leading through rich and broad fields, led into the wealthy inland country, the rich part of Fife; the other, with scattered stages instead of the trees, growing after a while closer and closer together, was the rough road to the "town," and was open to the sea-view and the sea breezes. The "town" was the little town of Anstruther on the Fife coast, the sea was the Firth of Forth, half ocean, half river; the time was twenty years ago. In this locality, and at that year, a sad period, happened the very brief and unhappy story I have now to tell.

In the Gushtat House lived Mrs. Sinclair, a widow, and her daughter. The house was, in its humble way, a kind of jointure house, though it belonged to no potent family or gentry magnate. It had been for generations—since it was built, indeed—the refuge of one widow or other, who had sufficient interest in the place to remain near it, or some connection with the soil. The present occupant had been the wife of the minister, and was the daughter of one of the earlier proprietors in the neighbourhood. She was a woman of some beauty did not belong to the town and heath; but yet she was not rich, nor a great lady in her own person. In those days life was simpler, more aristocratic perhaps, but less luxurious, and far more homely. Nowadays the coast towns are Fife are unendurable. In summer they are nothing but great receptacles of herring, and in their silvery state, as they come in glistening shoals in the boats from sea, and in the hideous course of economical destruction and traffic. "Salts and spermaceti" and busy women armed with knives, operate upon the once harmless "crave," line the stony little streets, and send up a line to heaven an unsavory testimony. You cannot catch herrings, if you are so unwary as to persist yourself in the season of that too popular sport. But it was not so fifty years ago. Then the herrings came in to be eaten fresh, or to be salted down in barrels, and did not have to go the upper hand of every one. There was no lucrative trade going to the salt and pungent harvest-time of the

They all show a very proper feeling my mother's reply; and nothing could be more true. Cousins to the fifth degree always turned up to take care of her, to her balls—to dance with her when there, to cheer her mother's solitude when he was gone, according to their several tastes and sexes. The Sinclairs were a very well connected* family, and it was a circumstance which added much to the comfort of their life.

As for Willy Erskine, he was a very nice young man, everybody allowed. He was a bachelor, he is sure. The Drumthwaite household was known not to be a rich one, and he was the third son. But he was doing what it was the proper thing for a third son to do. It had not been his vocation to go to India, like his second and fourth brothers, though, no doubt, that would have been the best way; and New Zealand and Australia had not been discovered, so to speak, in those days. His eldest brother was at the bar, and Johnny, the fifth, was to be the clergyman of the family; so that Willy's lot was clear before him, even had he not been impelled towards it by a scientific turn of mind. He was pursuing his medical studies at Edinburgh during those years when Norma and her mother came in the winter to Heriot Row. In summer it was quite a practice, while going to walk from Drumthwaite to the house which was only sixteen miles off, down to the struthair on one pretence or other,—an expedition which made it quite natural, as it was all necessary, to "look in" at the Gus's little house, somewhere near the time of the Friday dinner. The fare on Mrs. Sinclair's table was homely, but it never occurred to her to grumble at the frequent visit, or to quarrel on any punctilio, or even a fresh tablecloth, with the population of the Gus's at home, which the population of the Gus's at home were always very easy in their minds of; for no lady in Fifed had a better stock of "napery," and none were more delicately, femininely alive to the beauties of clean linen. Besides which, everybody in those days washed at home, and clean tablecloths cost nothing,—a matter of primitive

the most frivolous and troublesome commissions. Thus the time went on imperceptibly, marking its progress on these or at least by no remarkable events. Nora was bridesmaid so often to her youthful friends that she began to declare loudly at she had forestalled her own luck, and could never be a bride,—but without any loss of faith in her own prediction. Yet, though this state of things was a very pleasant one, it would come to an end, one time or another, it would come to an end.

The end was brought about, as it happened, by another event, of great importance to young Erskine, and in which Nora and her mother, as in duty bound, took a lively interest. Willy's professional studies came to a conclusion, and the ladies went, well pleased, to witness the erous ceremonial which he was "capped," as it is called,—an outward sign and token of his having attained the dignity of M. D. He had undergone his examination with credit, and his friends were proud. At night there was a party of fifty folk at Harewood, where the young people went to eat and supper, and there were substantial but light, and one still more substantial and very heavy meal, on the health of the young doctor was drunk with kindly enthusiasm. "Willy, give me your advice and get a wife next," said one of the genial guests, and the suggestion was received with general applause.

"A doctor without a wife is like rigging a boat about a ship," said another adviser. "There's two professions that must always be the ballast of a petticoat. As for a doctor, like your brother Sandy, he's better without one, if he could be brought to think so. And John will be the laird, and he can't be married without a wife."

"But a minister and a doctor need no choice. You'll ask us to your wedding next, if you'll be guided by me."

"What Captain Maitland says is very true," said Mrs. Sinclair; "a doctor's never married in families till he's a married man. You're but young, and there's no wonder except for that. When I was a young woman myself, and needing doctor's help even a family connection would have

The Sunday School Picnic.

It is a glad picnic party. The Sunday-school had gone out into the leafy forest. The dark object in the heavens, eight hundred miles long and two thousand miles high, is a cloud. It got to the woods as soon as the picnic, and is there yet. Under the great oak you can see the dancier. The great winter-proof mound in the middle of the table sullenly laughing at the storm is a biscuit-cake. The teacher of the infant class did it herself for the little ones. But the storm saved them. See, the lightning smacked the cake. It will never strike anything else. There stands the cake, without a crack. The teacher has shaved and is bright, lies the thunderbolt. Under the tall tree is a dying dog. He got in the way and the superintendent felled him to earth with one blow of a biscuit. The figure wrapped in the ghostly drapery of a water-soaked linen duster, leading the way to the cars, is the teacher of the young ladies' Bible class. His influence with that class is gone forever. The young ladies will never be able to look at him again without thinking how he looked on this occasion. In the hickory tree you see a grief-stricken face peering down. It is the superintendent. He climbed up there to fix the ring, and before they could throw him the cake the storm came up and the picnic adieu *sine die* and *sine mora*. And he is waiting for the last stragglers to disappear. When it comes down, the last offered to play school picnics often enough to know better than to slide down a shell bark trolley tree before an audience. The man in the umbrella under his arm is the treasurer. He is getting drenched, but he does not raise his umbrella. He knows there is paint on the inside of it, but for the life of him he can not remember whose it is. He is watching his chance to take the umbrella to a stranger.—*Burlington Free-Press*.

Singing Sand.

A. A. Julien of New York, and H. C. Otton of Connecticut, contributed a paper on a recent number of *Science* relative to a scientific investigation of the "Singing Sand," Manchester, Mass. The phenomenon which gives rise to the name of the sand is confined to the portion of sand lying between the water-line and the loose sand above the reach of ordinary high tides. The sand emits a sound, but clearly cannot be raised into the air, so, answer feelingly, the sounding sand is near the surface; at a depth of one or two feet it ceases, perhaps because of moisture. The sound is produced by pressure, and may be likened to subdued crushing; it is of low intensity and pitch, is not metallic nor crackling. It occurs when the sand is pressed by ordinary pressure, increases with sudden pressure of foot upon the sand, and is perceptible when stirring by the hand, even plunging one finger and removing it suddenly. It is intensified by dragging wood over beach.

Our authors review and cite very fully the literature of the subject, giving in full a description of the singing sands of the coast of Kani, one of the Hawaiian group, and gives a sound as of distant thunder on anything of weight is dragged over it, and prevents the sound. That sand is calcareous. Hugh Miller cites similar instances at Jabel Nakous in Arabia Petrea, and Regawan near Cabul. Those are singing sands. The sounds were a sort of rumbling. In Churchill County, Nevada, a similar phenomenon is described, with regard to sand hills, as like the sound of telegraph wire when the wind blows them.

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The boy who doesn't leave over seven things-post, kick a lame dog, snatch a full set of my beans in front of every neighbor's store, knock over a box or two, and kick the handle of every pump on the sidewalk on his way home from school, is either a scoundrel or a genius.—*Keokuk Gate*

ment, was made. The professor brought that a thorough examination of the State House should be made by a competent and conscientious engineer. The shelves in the room where the were found should be taken out, to be plastered and furring, and the woodwork beneath thoroughly inspected. The presence of the pests could be discerned by the calcareous deposit which they leave behind them. Particular pains should be taken to see that they have not gone up into the rafters or down, and the investigation should be carried into the cellar. All of the little ants might not be exterminated, but it should be ascertained where they come from, and their nest be destroyed by the use of kerosene. They probably exist in other parts of the building; but to examine the whole of it would be a very expensive and much money. A thousand dollars expended now, however, might save an expenditure of \$10,000 some years later. The professor thought that a standing item for their extermination should be included in the annual appropriation bill, not only for the immediate removal of something being done, but also that the public mind might be kept constantly reminded of the danger threatening their Capital and its valuable contents. The ants frequently come through old, unused sewers, and an old sewer will probably be found in the "dungeon" where they have been observed. Another fruitful cause of their getting into buildings is the old stumps of trees which builders do not take sufficient care to remove. The ants go along through the cracks of these stumps, and thus eat their way into the building. The nest of the ants which have entered the State House is undoubtedly some distance away, probably in the Common or Public Garden, or possibly

or who will be the next victim to be,

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